

C. SITE SIGNIFICANCE AND SELECTION FOR INVENTORY REPORT

Once completed by the researchers, Site Survey Report forms were returned to the N.C. Natural Heritage Program. These forms were then reviewed to determine the significance of each site. In this report, only those sites designated by the Heritage Program as having National, State, or Regional significance (denoted A, B, and C, respectively) were included.

From Site Survey Report forms completed by Murrell, Nordman, and Kelly and from natural areas information already in the Heritage Program's database, the authors selected 130 significant natural areas to be described in this report. These natural areas were chosen because of their ecological significance (based on quality and integrity of the natural communities), the population size and condition of rare plants or animals present at these sites, and the uniqueness or importance of the geomorphic features present at these sites.

The following are descriptions of the significance categories utilized in this inventory report.

NATIONAL significance (A). The natural area is considered to be of national importance. The site is one of the best (in the top 5 or 6) natural areas of its kind in the country featuring an exemplary natural community, rare species population, or outstanding geomorphic feature. Such a site is usually in relatively undisturbed condition and is often extensive in size, or the population sizes of the significant plants and animals present are large and healthy. Such a natural area is given an extremely high priority for protection.

STATE significance (B). The natural area is considered to be of statewide importance. The site contains one of the best (in the top 5 or 6) natural areas of its kind in the state featuring an exemplary natural community, rare species population, or outstanding geomorphic feature. However, there are other natural areas with similar ecological features that are more significant elsewhere in the state or in the country. Usually, the natural communities present are relatively undisturbed and the populations of the rare species present are fairly large. Such a natural area is given a very high priority for protection.

REGIONAL significance (C). The natural area is considered to be of regional importance. The site contains one of the best (in the top 5 or 6) natural areas of its kind in the region featuring an exemplary natural community, rare species population, or outstanding geomorphic feature. For this report, a site of regional significance is one of the most significant sites in the northwestern portion of the Coastal Plain and northeastern portion of the Piedmont. However, there are other natural areas with similar ecological features that are more significant elsewhere in the Coastal Plain or Piedmont of North